

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SCCT-01 SY-05 SCS-03 SCA-01

SAM-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 /080 W

----- 123338

O R 100430Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5064

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 6779

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS LE

SUBJECT: CAPTURE OF TWO AMERICANS IN BEIRUT

REF: BEIRUT 8678

1. EMBASSY HAS CONTACTED THOMAS AND COLLINS, WHO HAVE GIVEN FOLLOWING DETAILS OF THEIR BEIRUT ORDEAL. THEY ARRIVED BEIRUT AIRPORT JUNE 29 AT 0030 HOURS, TOOK TAXI INTO TOWN AND, AFTER THREE TO FIVE MINUTES' DRIVE, WERE STOPPED AT CHECKPOINT AND ASKED FOR PASSPORTS. MEN AT CHECKPOINTS WORE "ARAB DRESS" (KAFIYAH). THEY ORDERED TWO AMERICANS OUT OF TAXI, CONFIDENTIAL

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TOOK THEM ACROSS ROAD, AND, BLINDFOLDING THEM, PUT

THEM INTO WAITING CAR. THEY DROVE FOR TEN MINUTES OR SO, AS DESCRIBED REFTEL. UPON ARRIVAL, THEY WERE TAKEN DOWN LONG STAIRWAY INSIDE BUILDING (STILL BLINDFOLEDED) AND WERE PUT INTO 8 FT BY 8 FT CELL, WITH THREE OTHERS (WHOM THEY ASSUME TO HAVE BEEN LEBANESE). ALL VALUABLES WERE TAKEN FROM THEM AT OUTSET; THOMAS ESTIMATES PERSONAL LOSS AT DOLLARS FOUR THOUSAND IN JEWELRY, COLLINS AT DOLLARS FOURTEEN HUNDRED IN CASH. THEY WERE LEFT COMPLETELY ALONE BY CAPTORS FOR NEXT FOUR DAYS. OUTSIDE CELL THEY COULD HEAR SCREAMS OF OTHER PRISONERS BEING BEATEN AND HEARD ONE SHOT AND KILLED. ALTHOUGH THEY HEARD ONE PRISONER SPEAK ENGLISH, AS REPORTED REFTEL, THEY ARE POSITIVE HE WAS NOT REPEAT NOT NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER.

2. ON FOURTH DAY, THOMAS AND COLLINS WERE TAKEN OUT OF CELL, AND TAKEN IN ELEVATOR ABOUT THREE FLOORS UP FOR SEPARATE INTERROGATION SESSIONS. THEY WERE AGAIN BLINDFOLDED, BUT BOTH AGREE THAT THERE WERE THREE INTERROGATORS PRESENT, TWO OF WHOM SPOKE ADEQUATE ENGLISH. (THROUGHOUT INCARCERATION, THOMAS AND COLLINS SAY THEY ACTUALLY SAW ONLY TWO CAPTORS ---BOTH ABOUT 25 YEARS OLD. ALL OTHERS ALWAYS WORE SKI MASKS.) INTERROGATION QUESTIONS CONCENTRATED ON REASONS FOR COMING TO BEIRUT, ESPECIALLY WITH SO MUCH MONEY. (THEY CARRIED CHECKS WORTH SOME DOLLARS 35 THOUSAND.) EACH SESSION LASTED 30 TO 45 MINUTES AND BOTH WERE TOLD THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY BE RELEASED.

3. AT MIDNIGHT JULY 5/6, THOMAS AND COLLINS WERE TAKEN OUT OF "PRISON", DRIVEN INTO MOUNTAINS AND RELEASED. PASS-PORTS AND MOST OF BELONGINGS WERE RETURNED. THEY CAUGHT TRUCK INTO TOWN AND WERE STOPPED BY UNIFORMED LEBANESE POLICE (OR MILITARY MEN) AT CHECKPOINT ON CORNICHE AND TAKEN TO SECURITY OFFICE VERY NEAR PHOENECIA HOTEL. THEY STATE THEY ASKED REPEATEDLY TO CONTACT AMERICAN EMBASSY, BUT WERE TOLD POLICE WOULD DO SO ON THEIR BEHALF. THEY GAVE DEPOSITIONS AND WERE THEN TAKEN TO "MAIN OFFICE" IN MOUNTAINS, WHERE THEY ONCE MORE RELATED THEIR TALE TO OFFICER NAMED "IBRAHIM" (REFTEL). HE TOLD THEM THEY CONFIDENTIAL

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WERE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE, INTIMATED THAT HE KNEW THEIR CAPTORS, TOLD THEM HIS STAFF WOULD CONTACT EMBASSY AND ESCORTED THEM TO AIRPORT. HE MENTIONED TO THEM ENROUTE THAT TAXI DRIVE HAD REPORTED THEIR CAPTURE TO LEBANESE AUTHORITIES AND THAT AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL WOULD CERTAINLY BE AT AIRPORT TO SEE THEM OFF. OF COURSE, NONE WAS THERE AND THOMAS AND COLLINS RETURNED TO CAIRO JULY 6 WITHOUT FURTHER MISHAP.

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